



January 2004

FrontLine Employee

A newsletter from the Employee Advisory Service (EAS)

Call EAS: Olympia (360) 753-3260 Seattle (206) 281-6315 Spokane (509) 482-3686

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Good Night to Sleep Problems



According to sleep disorder expert Brook Judd, MD, of Dartmouth Medical School, the most common cause of sleep problems is undiagnosed depression and anxiety. If sleep problems persist, talk to your doctor, but anticipate being asked a lot of questions so the root of your sleep problem can be identified. There are many helpful sleep medications, but if they mask a more serious medical condition, your sleep problems may not go away. Help your doctor treat you more effectively by keeping a sleep diary before your appointment. Record the time you sleep and wake-up, how long it takes to fall asleep, early morning awakening experiences, and other sleep concerns.

Adapted from www.healthysleeping.com

A Really New, New Year's Resolution

New Year's resolutions—they're great. But are you so focused on personal change that you could use a computer spreadsheet to keep track of your New Year's resolutions? This might be the year to add a New Year's resolution to the list that really is new—*accepting yourself as you are*. With some imperfections and flaws, you really may be okay after all. Indeed, healthy self-acceptance might be the key to helping you achieve many of the other goals on your list!



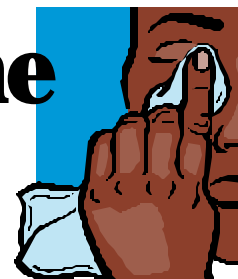
Don't Let Rumors Rule



Harmful rumors and gossip about fellow workers are always going to be a possibility in the workplace, particularly large work organizations. But you can help shorten their life span with three interventions:

- 1) Squelch It: Discount the rumor by refusing to listen to it;
- 2) Suppress It: Supply correct information (when appropriate) to end it fast; and
- 3) Body Block It: Refuse to let it get past you and take on more life by not passing it on to others. Of course, the best prevention is personal self-control so rumors and gossip don't start. To that end, it may be helpful to remember an old Turkish proverb: "Who gossips to you will gossip about you."

Subdue the FLU!



It's no news—this flu season is one of the worst. Here are a few more tips to help you avoid the virus: 1) Wash your hands often, especially if you are shaking hands frequently in the workplace. 2) Use disposable tissues instead of cloth handkerchiefs. 3) Teach children how to cough to avoid spreading germs. 4) As you exit a public washroom, use a paper towel to grab the door handle. 5) There are times when you really should stay home to avoid spreading flu germs. This can be if you or your family members are coughing, sneezing or have aches or fever associated with the flu.

Empathize with Customers



Any professional counselor will tell you that there is power in empathy. Empathy is the ability to communicate understanding and sensitivity to the feelings and experiences of another person. It is both an art and a skill in interpersonal communication. Being empathic helps the other person truly feel heard, and the more accurate the empathy, the better it feels. Empathy is useful in many professions, particularly customer service. Accurate empathy can shorten the time your customer feels disgruntled. It can enhance your, and your agency's reputation, and it can reduce customer service stress. Empathy is sometimes measured in "levels." The goal is to respond with the highest level of empathy possible. Consider how you would respond to the following complaint. Then see the different responses below and their corresponding empathic levels. Did you ring the bell with a Level 5?

Customer complaint: "I've had to wait too long to see the worker I have an appointment with!"

Level 1: "Really! I don't think you've waited longer than anyone else."

Level 2: "I am surprised you've had to wait so long."

Level 3: "Wow. I am sorry you've been kept waiting so long."

Level 4: "That must have been frustrating. How can I help?"

Level 5: "I'm sure you have lots to do. Let's see what we can do to get the ball rolling, OK?"

Good News ABOUT TEENS



Last summer the Horatio Alger Association conducted a national survey of 1,055 high school students ages 14-18, and found that 75 percent said they get along well, if not extremely well, with their parents or guardians. Only 3 percent said they don't get along well with their parents. The survey also reported that teens would like to spend more time with their parents and family, and that teens put family members on the top of their list of role models—ahead of entertainers and athletes! Three out of four teenagers are optimistic about the future. Experts say the message in the survey is don't underestimate the influence of parents over peers in affecting youth behavior. (The Horatio Alger Association provides scholarships and mentoring to disadvantaged students.)

Source: Horatio Alger Association, *The State of Our Nation's Youth Survey*, 2003.

DIVORCE STRESS & EAPs



As anyone who has experienced it could tell you, the stress associated with the break-up of a marital relationship comes in stages. Most divorced individuals report that their greatest level of stress occurred while considering divorce; the second most distressing period was when the decision was made to divorce; and the least stressful time was after the separation or divorce. Although employees often seek help for marital problems, fewer consider EAS, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to manage the stress of divorce. The earlier you call the EAP, the more likely you are to reduce the effects of the divorce on your health and productivity. The EAP can help with finding support, depression, sleep issues, childcare concerns, financial and legal concerns, and more.

The Worth of St. John's Wort



You may have heard that some European studies of the herbal drug St. John's Wort (*hypericum*) showed it was effective in treating mild depression. Based upon research that followed, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration took the position in May 2002 that St. John's Wort is not effective in treating depression. Still, many people say St. John's Wort has worked for them. Talk to your doctor before using St. John's Wort. Recently, St. John's Wort was shown to adversely interact with at least ten widely prescribed medications, particularly those used for AIDS patients. Other contraindications and cautions exist.

Learn more about St. John's Wort from www.hypericum.com and the FDA web site www.FDA.gov.

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